FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LT. GOVERNOR BROWN ANNOUNCES CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OF MARYLAND'S HEALTH BENEFIT EXCHANGE FOR OPERATION
State Receives Federal Certification for Maryland Health Connection

ANNAPOLIS, Md (December 10, 2012) — Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown announced today that Maryland is among the first six states in the U.S. to receive conditional approval to operate a state-based health insurance exchange in 2014. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has conditionally certified the Maryland Health Connection to operate for the first plan year in 2014, allowing the State of Maryland to expand access to quality, affordable health care to more Marylanders. Conditional certification as a state-based exchange indicates that Maryland will be operationally ready for open enrollment beginning in October 2013 and that the State continues to meet the requirements of the federal government.

"Today's approval by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is an important milestone for our State and for the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange," said Lt. Governor Brown, who leads the O'Malley-Brown Administration's health care reform efforts. **"Our progress has been the result of insurance producers, carriers, third-party administrators, health care providers, advocates, and consumers coming together to build a marketplace that will best meet the needs of individuals and small businesses throughout Maryland. Thanks to their hard work, as well as the efforts of Maryland's Congressional Delegation and the General Assembly, we're leading the way in health care reform and will continue to maximize the Affordable Care Act in order to make Maryland the healthiest state in the nation."**

"Congratulations on reaching this significant milestone on the path to establishing an exchange for the citizens of Maryland," said Secretary Sebelius, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. **"Conditional approval reflects the substantial progress the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange has made and an expectation that MHBE will be ready to provide affordable, quality coverage for consumers and small businesses in 2014."**

Members of Maryland's Congressional delegation applauded the announcement.

"Maryland is an innovation state, and I am committed to ensuring we are at the forefront of putting health care reform into action," U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski said. **"I fought for the Affordable Care Act to ensure that Marylanders have access to health insurance that is affordable, comprehensive, reliable and undeniable. By creating consumer-friendly marketplace exchanges, Maryland families will have a one-stop shop to compare health plans and get the high quality and comprehensive health care they deserve at a price they can afford. The fact that Maryland is one step ahead of the curve in implementing these Exchanges comes as no surprise. It is good news for all Marylanders and will serve as a good template for the nation moving forward."**

"Maryland's outstanding planning effort has paid off, and our state can now move forward to expand access to many who have previously been denied affordable coverage. As a member of the Finance Committee, I'll continue working to ensure that federal resources are made available as the Maryland Health Connection is launched," said U.S. Senator Ben Cardin.

"I am pleased that Maryland is among the first states out of the gate to implement the second phase of the Affordable Care Act," said Congressman Chris Van Hollen. **"The exchanges created as part of the reform law will help families and small businesses across the state access quality, affordable health care."**

"I am so proud that, once again, Maryland has demonstrated its ability to provide exceptional health care for our residents," said Congressman Elijah Cummings. **"I applaud the leadership of Governor O'Malley, Lt. Governor Brown, Secretary Sharfstein and their entire team for taking the steps necessary to ensure Maryland is ready to implement all of the benefits available under the Affordable Care Act."**

"Today's announcement recognizes the groundbreaking work Maryland has done to create a transparent marketplace where our state's citizens and small businesses can access quality, affordable health insurance," stated Congressman Steny Hoyer. **"Thanks to the efforts of Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown, Maryland is leading our nation when it comes to implementing the Affordable Care Act and providing our residents with more affordable and accessible health care."**

"This is great news for Marylanders who will have access to high-quality, affordable health coverage through Maryland Health Connection," said Congressman Sarbanes, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which oversees federal health policy. **"Since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law, Maryland has been a leader in developing this exchange and implementing the law. Maryland Health Connection will give uninsured individuals and small businesses access to the kind of group rates that are now available only to large employers and it will provide real relief to hundreds of thousands of individuals who have nowhere to turn."**

"I am proud that the state of Maryland is one of six states to lead by example by having their state-based health exchanges certified," said Congresswoman Donna Edwards. **"It is a testament to our state's coordination at all levels of government, and our commitment to ensuring full implementation of the Affordable Care Act to provide quality health care for all Marylanders. Today, a new chapter begins for our state and for our nation. I want to thank the O'Malley/Brown Administration, including Sec. Sharfstein, and all our local officials for their hard work in this tremendous effort."**

The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange will operate Maryland Health Connection as the online portal where individuals, families and small businesses will compare health insurance options, determine eligibility for tax credits and cost-sharing reductions, and enroll in qualified health plans or public programs, such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) beginning in October 2013 (for coverage effective January 2014). Marylander residents and small businesses can sign up for updates from Maryland Health Connection by visiting www.MarylandHealthConnection.gov or texting "Connected" to 69302.

"This is a great step on the path towards a healthier Maryland," said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and chair of the Board of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. **"We will continue to work with all of our partners to make the Maryland Health Connection a success."**

It is estimated that as many as 150,000 individuals are expected to enroll in qualified health plans during the first year of operations of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, increasing to approximately 275,000 by 2020.

Lt. Governor Brown leads the O'Malley-Brown Administration's efforts to reduce costs, expand access, and improve the quality of care for all Marylanders. Under the leadership of Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown, Maryland has implemented reforms that have expanded health coverage to over 341,000 Marylanders, half of whom are children, established Maryland's Health Benefit Exchange, and put the State in position to maximize the Affordable Care Act. Independent analysis by the Hilltop Institute at the University of Maryland Baltimore County this summer found that implementation of the Affordable Care Act is expected to benefit the state's budget by $672 million through 2020, generate

more than $3 billion in annual economic activity, cut the number of uninsured in half, and create more than 26,000 jobs.

###

About Maryland Health Connection:
The Maryland Health Connection is the marketplace for individuals, families and small businesses to compare and enroll in health insurance, as well as determine eligibility for Medicaid and other assistance programs, federal tax credits and cost-sharing reductions. Enrollment through Maryland Health Connection is scheduled to begin in October 2013, with insurance coverage beginning January 1, 2014. An estimated 150,000 individuals are expected to enroll in qualified health plans (QHPs) during the first year, increasing to approximately 275,000 by 2020. www.MarylandHealthConnection.gov

About Maryland Health Benefit Exchange:
The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange is a public corporation and independent unit of the State government established in April 2011 in accordance with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA). The Exchange has a nine member Board of Trustees that includes the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Insurance Commissioner and Executive Director of the Maryland Health Care Commission. The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange is responsible for the administration of the Maryland Health Connection. www.MarylandHBE.com